

DRIVE FOE UPON FATAL TRIANGLE

Culminating Battle of War May Be Fought on Meuse

REACTION IS WEAK

Germans Virtually Without Reserves as Foch Rains Relentless Blows

By WALTER DURANTY Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co. With the French Armies, Oct. 17. "Sambre and Meuse"—the title of a famous French marching song—is the watchword of the Allied effort today. The irresistible pressure of Foch's armies is forcing the Germans back upon the fatal triangle where the culminating battle of the war may take place.

On the extreme left the drive of the British, French and Belgians is aimed direct at Mons. On the right the Americans and French, pushing toward Sedan and Metz, are steadily driving the boches before them toward the region between the Sambre and Meuse. The future is big with promise, for as the battle progresses the increasing weakness of the German reaction becomes apparent.

Germany is now suffering from the inherent faults of Ludendorff's strategy in the spring and early summer, and the superiority of Foch's methods of attack. Subsequently, Ludendorff had promised victory by the use of shock divisions formed by emancipation of the rest of the army. Attacks after attack was pushed home to the point of exhaustion, but always the Allies were able to bar the road ere it was too late.

Foch Goes No Respite Finally Foch judged the German army to be sufficiently exhausted and struck in turn. Since then the enemy has had no respite. Instead of intermittent offensives, launched at long intervals, the Allied attacks have been continuous. The dispirited Germans, to whom a victorious end of the war has been promised, have been reduced, therefore, to a state of utter despair. The Allied attacks have been continuous. The dispirited Germans, to whom a victorious end of the war has been promised, have been reduced, therefore, to a state of utter despair.

While the Allies have been advancing victoriously in the north, the pressure of the French in the center and the Americans on the right prevents the enemy from transferring troops to the point most threatened.

Already on October 10 it was known that the Germans had at the outside twelve fresh divisions as a total strategic reserve. Perhaps as many more were hidden in the forests and woods, but these will be incapable for two or three weeks to take an active part in the battle. In the last five days the demand for supplies has been so tremendous in the hard-pressed German army, and today there has not been a drop in the bottom of the reserve bucket.

No less serious is the shortage of material. Numerous captured orders bear witness to the lack of munitions. The word "strictest economy" recur with painful frequency. Though many military units have been seriously reduced, it has, nevertheless, been necessary to reduce the number of guns per battery from four to three in many cases. In three months the Allies have destroyed or captured more than 5000 cannon—a full quarter of the total artillery force of Germany. At the same time the forced "combing out" of workmen from the factories has seriously lowered production, and this, in turn, grows daily more pronounced and dangerous.

Losses "Inside Lines" Hardly less important are the consequences of the withdrawal from the Laon region. Hitherto the enemy position in France gave him "inside" lines of communication. The Allies, attacking centrally, could be met by a displacement of troops over an infinitely smaller area. Now the jamming of the boches back upon virtually the sole two good lines of communication that remain—Paris-Breton and Paris-Breton—renders aggressive reactions upon anything, but a local scale, impossible.

Add to all this the inevitable dismay spreading throughout the army in consequence of the total discredit of the military party.

The last ray of hope on the German horizon was an attempt to divide the Allies by an appeal for an armistice. President Wilson has refused utterly. Nothing remains to save the enemy from disaster or complete surrender, in the opinion of many military experts.

REVOLT IN CHEMNITZ

German Prisoner's Letter Tells of Trouble in Saxony

Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co. With the American Army in France, Oct. 17.—A letter dated October 9, taken from a German prisoner, contains the following: "Paul wrote me that he was on his way to Macedonia. He wrote from Dresden where he had been delayed—he did not know whether on account of the peace rumors or on account of the revolution which has broken out in Chemnitz."

WOULD OCCUPY BERLIN

Sir A. Conan Doyle Says It Is Absolutely Necessary

WAR ROLLS PAST HALLOWED FIELD

Laon, Region Memorial to Heroic Dead of Other Battles

YOUTH FILLS ROADS

Stream of Soldiers Pours Onward Through Old Trenches, by Old Dugouts

By G. H. PERRIS Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co. With the French Armies, Oct. 17. Every man going up by Laon on the French front on the Somme must pass over the Aisne heights and then down across the Ailette and the canal and through the wooded valley beside the black buttress of the St. Gobain massif. This countryside, for four years, the cornerstone of the German fortifications in France, can now be seen as a whole, and I doubt whether in any of the theaters of war there is a landscape in which so much of horror is held in a setting so brilliant.

Seen from a distance on either side from the south bank of the Marne or the north bank of the Ailette, the two valleys and hills beyond are masses of varied color, for the woods have put on their brightest autumn dress. Across them, from the south to the north flows the torrent of the French advance, a double line of traffic which constantly goes tied up in little knots that are unraveled with wonderful speed.

Field guns on motor lorries and heavier pieces with their caissons jutting over the broken roads, columns of marching infantry, ambulance cars, wagon full of provisions, not only for the army but for the liberated population—all are like the immense trek of a host advancing into a desert.

Boys' Stories Entail The stream flows slowly through villages smashed to chalky rubble, through old trenches and wire fields, by old dugouts and abandoned trenches and dressing stations. Children of the tropics, with black or yellow faces and gleaming eyes, watch it. Old territorialists watch it. In intervals of their rest, they sit on the ground, and the youngsters go on their bravest to victory and death.

The story of the Chemin-des-Dames, of La Faux and Malmont, of the vast Mont Parnasse cavern, where I spent a momentous day last Christmas, of the slopes where we were chased by boche armor, the story of the dead and the humble, silent sacrifices are things of the past, a part of history that will shine in the records.

It is not that it is effaced, but I think that when this bright sun sets the neighborhood woods lose their colors and traits of the war fall dim and cold. Then the ghosts of the dead will walk among these abandoned trenches. Broken wire will not hinder, nor poisonous odors disturb them. There is no longer even a sign post to show where, among these abandoned trenches, the German army, but they will know. Let us leave it to them—this Gogolika between two shining valleys; let us leave it as it is.

In all, it is for me an indelible foil among these abandoned trenches. It is a lesson to mankind. And some day, for those who cannot come so far to learn, a new Dante may find a magic to put into worthy words the pictures from which I turn away for the last time with clouded eyes and harrowed memory.

I have sent only a hurried note of what the good folk of Laon told me about their four years' martyrdom. These things should be told with scrupulous exactitude. It is not exact to say that the boches were taken away in the German retreat. Twenty-four inhabitants, twelve being men and twelve women, were deported in January last and the Germans interned them in Russia and the women at Holzthum, on the pretext that France had similarly taken Abatant hostages. By an arrangement signed by Berne, these exiles were returned to Laon and repatriated to France last April.

The Mayor, Senator Hermant, was removed on Saturday, not as a hostage, but on the pretext that he must give an account of his stewardship to the American relief committee. As he could do that as well as at Paris, it is evident that the real reason was to prevent him from speaking to his countrymen. Three hundred mobilizable men were also taken, and presumably are now working for their captors, or are in prison camps.

Had it not been for the noble work of the American relief committee, the people of Laon, as of all the invaded regions, would long ago have suffered actual famine. That most of them are alive is due to no mercy or administrative capacity of the German army, but to the committee and to it alone and that should be never forgotten. The invaders have simply used this philanthropic work, together with their system of requisition, taxation and fines, to produce hard labor without cost to themselves while they were sucking out all the natural or accumulated wealth of the country.

Broadly, the system was this: First, the population was, as far as possible, compelled by petty persecution to change its French coin or notes into German paper money; but this is still going on in Laon, and a little German gold. Next the able-bodied were called, under pressure of fines, to labor at a pittance which the municipality was required to pay in municipal notes. Then, under pretense of continuing the French taxation and on the old scale, the whole community was subjected to levy, ostensibly to pay the cost of the German administration, though in a civil sense, there was no administration, no public service, no social organization and no taxation. The municipality has had to issue several millions of francs of paper money on its own credit for these purposes.

THE WAR AS SEEN BY SOLDIERS



U. S. ADVANCE MENACES FOE'S LINE OF RETREAT

Germans Ordered to Hold Argonne Line at All Costs. Safety of Main Forces at Stake

By EDWIN L. JAMES Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co. With the American Army in France, Oct. 17. In consideration of the German request for an armistice one may consider on a large scale the situation of the German military forces and the present military situation with regard to their withdrawal, unimpeded or otherwise, from the great salient, or, in other words, that part of the western front from the sea to the Meuse River, which means troops which are now occupying Belgium and northern France. One may well look also at the scant supply lines, which are more or less necessarily correlated with withdrawal facilities.

First, one must recognize that in the withdrawal of supply the railroads play a primary role. The German army as an army cannot be withdrawn from France and Belgium, nor can it be supplied where it is, except by the use of railroads. If the Germans had twice the numbers of soldiers and trucks they now have they could not withdraw without railroads.

The German front from the Meuse to the sea may be divided from the standpoint of communications into three sectors. The first extends from the sea to the south of Lille. This sector is served by railroads clearing through Brussels. The second section reaches from south of Lille to Laon, and is served by railroads through Namur. The third sector, from Laon to the Meuse, has communications clearing through Metziers.

Has Neck of Bottle Looking at the camp one sees that the Holland boundary makes a big sweep southward, turning north from Liege. Looking south from the Holland boundary one finds that about seventy-five miles brings one within gun range of the Allied artillery. Therefore one has something of a bottle, with a large mouth, but nevertheless, a bottle. Through this wide mouth pass the German supply communications and also lines by which the forces must withdraw whether in compliance with terms of an armistice or before Foch's troops.

Look at the transportation map and you will see that there is in this mouth two great arteries of communication. One runs along the northern rim of the mouth through Liege. The other runs through Luxembourg. The lines of communication through Brussels and through Namur, serving the German front from the sea to Laon, pass through Liege. The lines of communication serving the German front from Laon to the Meuse pass through Luxembourg. Between Luxembourg and Liege there are no important railway lines, and the Germans must get out of Belgium and France by these gateways.

Looking closer at the German communications system one sees that the German commands look at the situation in its real gravity. An order issued October 1 calls on the German troops in front of the Americans to hold at all costs, because of the danger to the Longuyon-Stenay-Sedan-Mezieres railway, "the most important artery of the western army." Because of a realization of the gravity of the situation the Germans have thrown the fiercest possible resistance against the First American Army, making the task assigned to Pershing's men the toughest one on the whole western front.

Future of Germany at Stake If the Americans should try to reach and should succeed in taking Stenay and Metziers, the German position would be untenable.

When we attacked on September 26 we hit the Hindenburg line. In bloody fighting we have driven the enemy back to the second line of defense, the Kriemhild line, which is now pierced in a number of places. The third line of defense in this sector runs from Stenay to Sedan and thence south to Metziers. When the British broke through the German second line in the west the enemy at once fell back toward another line. But to fall back to the Stenay-Sedan-Mezieres line before our army would place Metziers under easy fire of our artillery. Knowing the vital importance the German command attaches to the Argonne-Meuse sector, it is believed the boche intends to fight desperately all the way back to his third line of defense.

It is interesting to make certain comparisons between the German resistance in the Cambrai sector and in the Argonne-Meuse sector. When we attacked on September 26, between the Aisne and the Meuse, the Germans had four divisions in line on this battlefield. Since then they have had thirteen whole divisions and equipment of two more divisions, making a total of fifteen extra divisions, of which eight were fresh and two were rushed from the Champagne front, despite important progress being made there by the French Fourth Army. On the Cambrai front the enemy had in line twenty-six divisions when the British and French started their attack, which the boche expected. Since then the enemy has thrown in thirty-four divisions, nine of which were fresh.

Montmedy, or in getting them under full gun range, or if the French should try to succeed in taking Metziers, the Germans would literally be in a bottle, with Liege as the mouth. Would that gateway be capable of supplying the millions of men Germany has in France or Belgium, or would it be capable of handling a forced withdrawal? German actions would indicate they believe it would not.

I have said that the French are twenty-five miles from Metziers and the Americans some twelve miles from Stenay, which means about fifteen miles from Montmedy. On the front in this direction are arrayed the Fourth French Army and the First American Army. The First American Army is astride the last organized defense system the boche has between it and a line running directly before the Metziers-Montmedy position. We are either beyond or on the Kriemhild-Stellung on the entire front of the First American Army. The Americans are up against this line on the positions to which the Germans retired after our reduction of the St. Mihiel salient. The German reserves are about exhausted, while American reserves are far from exhausted. The First, Third and Fourth German armies are before the First American Army, against which General von Der Marwitz, according to a captured order, demands successful resistance on which "the future of Germany perhaps depends."

The state of mind shown in the Von Der Marwitz order explains the frantic resistance of the Germans opposing our advance. As an instance of this fact, the enemy has used four or five Prussian Guard divisions, the flower of the German army, against the First American Army. It has been explained that our advance threatens the railroad which is the feeding point for the German front from the vicinity of Laon toward Metziers. The crippling of the transportation in this great sector would imperil the whole German front.

MAURICE SEES NO NEW SEDAN NEAR

General Believes There Is No Likelihood of Immediate Collapse

TEUTON DEFEAT SURE

Expert Points Out Difficulty in Cutting Off Large Force on Wide Front

By MAJ. GEN. SIR FREDERICK B. MAURICE Former Director of Operations of the British Army Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co. London, Oct. 17.

The excitement of the last few days has led not unnaturally to some exaggerated views of the military position on the western front. That position is extraordinary favorable, but we do not improve it by overestimating the chances in our favor. The Germans have given us a lesson in the dangers of exaggeration, which it behooves us not only to remember, but to mark and learn. There has been talk of cutting off whole German armies, of another great Sedan, but I confess that I cannot see any immediate likelihood of a military cataclysm overtaking the German armies in the west.

As a result of Sir Douglas Haig's victory of October 8, the Germans have been compelled to withdraw to the Hindenburg line, while at Le Cateau the Germans were quite completely and already the Americans north of Verdun are breaking the Kriemhild line. The French at Sedan are breaking into the Hindenburg line, while at Le Cateau the Germans are menacing the northern extension of the Hindenburg system. It is extremely doubtful then, whether the Germans will be able to remain long in this new refuge. But, on the whole, their withdrawal has been well carried out. They have been counter-attacking fiercely on the Selle, and there is no sign that their fighting spirit has been broken though it certainly has been sensibly weakened.

Difficult to Cut Off Large Force It is a very difficult problem to cut off a considerable portion of forces numbering 4,000,000 men who are deployed on a continuous front presenting no flanks open to attack. When the enemy finds that owing to the great Allied drive forward part of his troops are left in an awkward salient, he can, by making use of the great delaying powers of modern weapons, protect the flanks of the salient long enough to enable him to get his troops out of it with more or less loss in men and material. His armies, being strung out on a very wide front, can use for retreat every road and every railway behind them, and there are many railways not shown on the ordinary maps which he has made since the beginning of the war.

In these circumstances Sedans are hard to come by. None the less, the military situation is one of great promise. The salient long enough to attack everywhere along his front has gone, and Foch's power of attacking everywhere is increasing almost daily. We have evidence of this in the recent changes which have been made in the grouping of the Allied forces. The First American Army, which

earned fame at St. Mihiel and has, since that victory was won, been pressing the Germans back into and through the Kriemhild line, in hardly two months old; and now the Second American Army is in the field. From information which has been given to us as to the number of American troops in France, we may fairly assume that it will not be long before the Third American Army makes its appearance, and in the meantime there will be no cessation in the inflow of American troops into France.

Fighting a Repetition The growth of the American force in France has enabled General Foch to withdraw the French army from his center and send it north to Flanders, where, in conjunction with the Belgian army and Sir H. Plumer's second army, it forms a group of armies under the supreme command of King Albert.

What is now taking place in Flanders is a repetition of what occurred at the end of September. The enemy has to do his utmost to hold Sir Douglas Haig on the Selle, just as he had to do his utmost to hold him on the Cambrai. St. Quentin front, because we break through again and advance up the valley of Sambre, we enforce further and hurried retreat of the enemy on the rest of the front. Similarly, he is forced for like reasons to oppose the Americans strenuously on the Meuse. This means a heavy tax on his dwindling reserves.

Foch's resources enabled him to strike at these fronts without reducing his pressure against the others. Today, he strikes in Flanders, tomorrow it may be somewhere else, and this is a process which he can continue until the Germans know enough to adopt a tone acceptable to the Allies.

Victory is Certain We have, therefore, to bear in mind, that even if a complete break-up of the military forces of the enemy in the west is not in sight, the military situation is so favorable to us that we can be confident that the enemy can be compelled to accede sooner or later to such terms as the Allies decide to demand.

Further, these are very definite indications that the enemy's internal and political conditions are certainly as great as his military problems, and when that is so, a sudden collapse, such as we saw in the case of Bulgaria, is always a possibility. That is a situation for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful, but it can only cloud our minds at a time when we need to keep them particularly clear if we allow ourselves to expect at once developments which nothing in the military situation appears to warrant.

As we expected, President Wilson's reply to Dr. Balfour insists on guarantees and adequate safeguards of our military supremacy to be determined by the military advisers of the Allied Governments, and it may be presumed that in the terms military supremacy the President means naval supremacy to be included. We can unquestionably secure both.



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